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# Three reasons Martin Luther King Jr. disliked being labeled "civil rights leader"

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By 1967, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had come to dislike being called a "civil rights leader." Here are **three reasons King disliked being labeled "civil rights leader:"**

(1) **Rev. King was first and foremost a religious leader, a preacher of the gospel**, not a secular civil rights leader like Stokely Carmichael or Floyd McKissick.

(2) Going beyond "civil rights," **Rev. King was committed to abolishing poverty by advancing "economic rights."** Constitutionally protected "civil rights" do not include "economic rights." Hence, King called for amending the US Constitution by adding an "economic Bill of Rights." Advancing "economic rights" (full employment supplemented by "guaranteed income") goes well beyond advancing constitutionally protected "civil rights" (such as voting rights). Restricting King to "civil rights" means excluding King from "economic rights." And so the label "civil rights leader" was being used against King. The "civil rights" label was being used to exclude King's call for "economic rights."

(3) Going beyond domestic "civil rights," **Rev. King was committed to nonviolence among nations, and thus to ending war in Vietnam.** When nonviolence is placed under the category of domestic "civil rights," it means US citizens should be nonviolent with respect to other US citizens. Non-citizens do not have constitutionally protected "civil rights." King's philosophy of nonviolence reached beyond concern for US citizens. King called for ending war in Vietnam. Restricting King's nonviolence to domestic "civil rights" means excluding King's nonviolence from international affairs. Again, the label "civil rights leader" was being used against King. The "civil rights" label was being used to exclude King's call for ending war in Vietnam.

Going beyond conceiving of King as a domestic "civil rights leader," **we should see Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a Holy Spirit inspired global "human rights leader."**

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